

**Oroville Facilities Relicensing Efforts  
Environmental Work Group  
Draft Narrative Reports for Resource Action Discussion**

**Resource Action:** EWG-50

**Task Force Recommendation Category:** 2

**Maintain the Cold Water Fishery Program in Lake Oroville**

**Date of Field Evaluation:** No field evaluation was conducted

**Evaluation Team:** Eric See and Michael Manwaring

**Description of Potential Resource Action Measure:**

This proposed Resource Action would constitute a continuation of an existing Department of Water Resources (DWR) program, that began with a September 22, 1994 FERC order. This FERC order required DWR to implement its Revised Recreation Plan for the Lake Oroville State Recreational Area (LOSRA), and one of the components of that recreation plan was for DWR to stock Chinook salmon in Lake Oroville, and conduct studies on this stocking program to develop optimum stocking rates for the reservoir. Once completed, DWR was to send the results of these studies to FERC along with recommendations for stocking coldwater fish in Lake Oroville. DWR sent these recommendations to FERC in early 2000, and subsequently had to suspend the fish stocking activities due to concerns related to fish disease. DWR's correspondence to FERC indicated that additional fish stocking studies would be conducted, and FERC would be notified of new stocking recommendations when they became available. On February 27, 2004, FERC issued an order requiring DWR to confer with DFG, NOAA Fisheries, USFWS, and other regulatory agencies as well as local public governmental and non-governmental organizations to develop a coldwater fish stocking plan each year through the end of the existing license.

**Related Resource Actions:**

There are other Resource Actions that are either similar to or otherwise related to this measure:

- EWG-31, that proposes to enhance fish habitat in Lake Oroville, primarily in the fluctuation zone of the reservoir.
- EWG-45, that proposed to create trophy salmonid stocking program in Afterbay similar to trophy stocking program in Lake Oroville.
- EWG-47, that propose create trout stocking program in suitable OWA ponds.
- EWG-48B, which proposes to stock bass in Lake Oroville.
- EWG-97A/B, that proposes to pass Feather River salmonids into the tributaries above Lake Oroville (related because some of these smolts would migrate into the Lake Oroville coldwater fishery).

**Nexus to the Project:**

Maintaining a cold water fishery program in Lake Oroville is part of a FERC order issued to DWR on September 22, 1994. This order required DWR to implement its Revised Recreation Plan for the LOSRA, and one of the components of that recreation plan was

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for DWR to stock fish in Lake Oroville, and conduct follow up studies related to stocking rates for the reservoir.

**Potential Constraints:**

The most critical constraint with this action is finding an adequate stock of coldwater fish to plant into Lake Oroville. Due to fish disease concerns at the FRH and Feather River below Lake Oroville, DFG currently will only allow coho salmon to be stocked. NOAA Fisheries has expressed concerns that coho salmon, which are not native to the Central Valley, may escape and compete with ESA listed Central Valley salmonids. They are also concerned about the potential genetic mixing of the Lake Oroville coho salmon with California coastal coho stocks which are also ESA listed.

**Design Considerations and Evaluation:**

This action would involve implementing the fish stocking recommendations developed under the current FERC license during 2004 (and possibly 2005) by DWR, DFG, USFWS, and NOAA Fisheries. Stocking recommendations need to be periodically reviewed to ensure they are meeting the goals of the recreational fishery at the reservoir, so this action would be implemented on a 5-year basis (these goals are part of the stocking recommendation development process). Stocking would be accomplished in cooperation with the DFG, using the DWR-funded Feather River Hatchery, as well as possibly other hatcheries that are funded by DFG. Eggs may need to be purchased by DWR that would supply the Feather River Hatchery and/or other DFG hatcheries.

**Cost Estimate:**

According to DWR personnel, the approximate annual costs for this measure would be \$60,000 for fish stocking, and \$5,000 for monitoring. There may also be additional costs related to more extensive monitoring (e.g., Coded Wire Tags), as well as activities associated with developing a more desirable stock of coldwater fish, such as a broodstock program using a California strain of coho, or fish sterilization so escapees could not spawn with native coho.

**Recommendations:**

This Resource Action would constitute a continuation of an existing DWR fish stocking program, that is required under the September 22, 1994 FERC order. It is recommended that this measure be further investigated by DWR to determine the appropriate course of action required to comply with the existing FERC order for the coldwater fishery program in Lake Oroville.